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# UNDERTONES

By

Madison Cawein

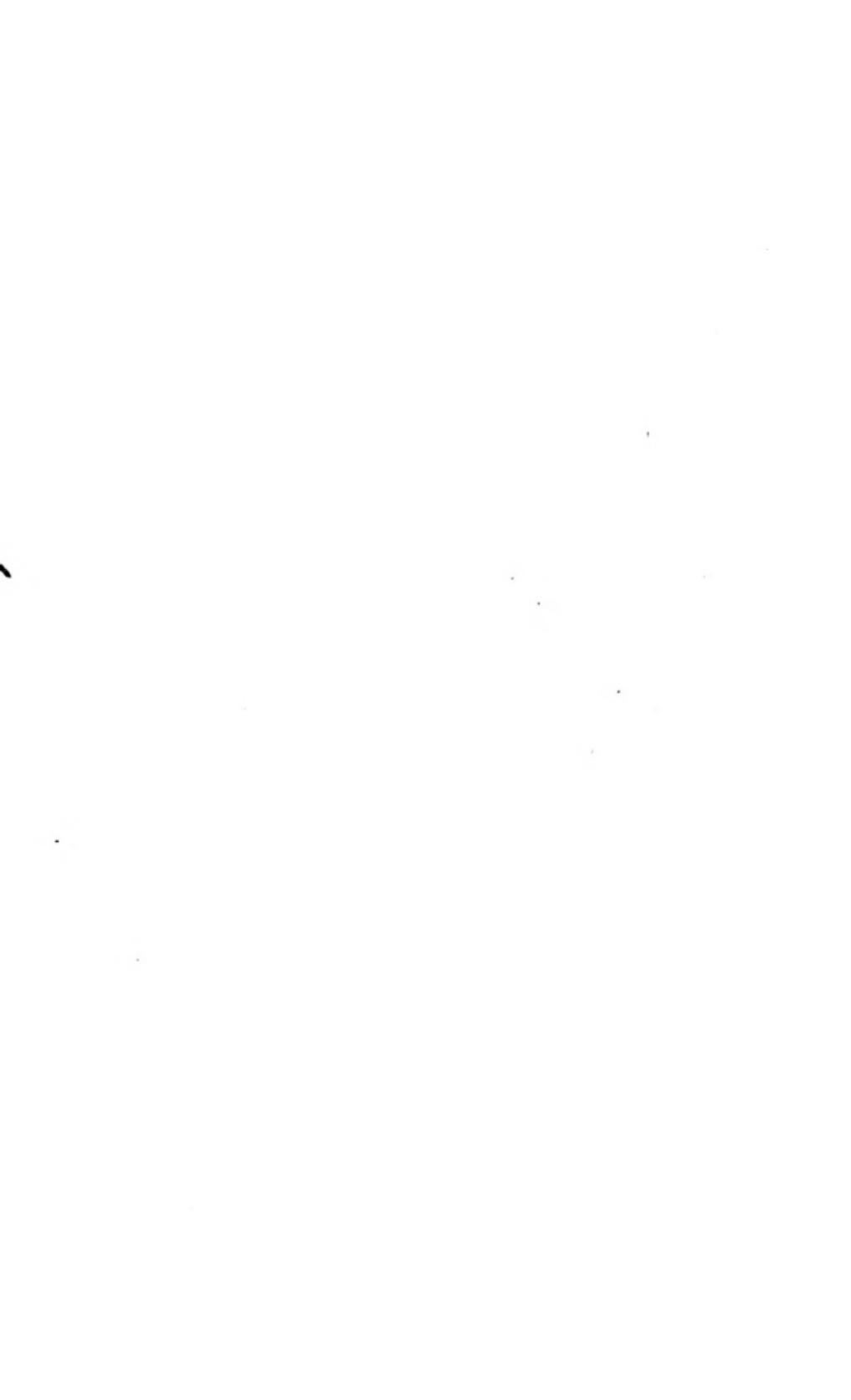


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OATEN STOP SERIES  
= III



**VNDERTONES**  
BY MADISON CAWEIN

**BOSTON COPELAND AND DAY**  
**M D CCC XCVI**



Feb 1897  
U.S.  
1896

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INSCRIBED TO THE PATHETIC  
MEMORY OF THE POET  
HENRY TIMROD

*Long are the days, and three times long the nights.  
The weary hours are a heavy chain  
Upon the feet of all Earth's dear delights,  
Holding them ever prisoners to pain.  
What shall beguile me to believe again  
In hope, that faith within her parable writes  
Of life, care reads with eyes whose tear-drops  
stain ?*

*Shall such assist me to subdue the heights ?  
Long is the night, and overlong the day.—  
The burden of all being ! — is it worse  
Or better, lo ! that they who toil and pray  
May win not more than they who toil and curse ?  
A little sleep, a little love, ah me !  
And the slow weight up the soul's Calvary !*

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## UNDERTONES



### THE DREAMER

EVEN as a child he loved to thrid the  
bowers,  
And mark the loafing sunlight's lazy laugh;  
Or, on each season, spell the epitaph  
Of its dead months repeated in their flowers;  
Or list the music of the strolling showers,  
Whose vagabond notes strummed through  
a twinkling staff;  
Or read the day's delivered monograph  
Through all the chapters of its dædal  
hours.  
Still with the same child-faith and child-  
regard  
He looks on Nature, hearing, at her heart,  
The beautiful beat out the time and place,  
Whereby no lesson of this life is hard,  
No struggle vain of science or of art,  
That dies with failure written on its face.

## UNDERTONES

### QUIET

A LOG-HUT in the solitude,  
A clapboard roof to rest beneath!  
This side, the shadow-haunted wood ;  
That side, the sunlight-haunted heath.

At daybreak Morn shall come to me  
In raiment of the white winds spun ;  
Slim in her rosy hand the key  
That opes the gateway of the sun.

Her smile shall help my heart enough  
With love to labor all the day,  
And cheer the road, whose rocks are rough,  
With her smooth footprints, each a ray.

At dusk a voice shall call afar,  
A lone voice like the whippoorwill's ;  
And, on her shimmering brow one star,  
Night shall descend the western hills.

She at my door till dawn shall stand,  
With Gothic eyes, that, dark and deep,  
Are mirrors of a mystic land,  
Fantastic with the towns of sleep.

## UNENCOURAGED ASPIRATION

### UNQUALIFIED

NOT his the part to win the goal,  
The flaming goal that flies before,  
Into whose course the apples roll  
Of self that stay his feet the more.

Beyond himself he shall not win  
Whose flesh is as a driven dust,  
That his own soul must wander in,  
Seeing no farther than his lust.

## UNENCOURAGED ASPIRATION

IS mine the part of no companion hand  
Of help, except my shadow's silent self?  
A moonlight traveller in Fancy's land  
Of leering gnome and hollow-laughing elf;

Whose forests deepen and whose moon  
goes down,  
When Night's blind shadow shall usurp  
my own;  
And, mid the dust and wreck of some  
old town,  
The City of Dreams, I grope and fall alone.

## UNDERTONES

### THE WOOD

WITCH-HAZEL, dogwood, and the  
maple here;  
And there the oak and hickory;  
Linn, poplar, and the beech-tree, far and  
near  
As the eased eye can see.

Wild-ginger; wahoo, with its wan balloons;  
And brakes of briars of a twilight green;  
And fox-grapes plumed with summer; and  
strung moons  
Of mandrake flowers between.

Deep gold-green ferns, and mosses red and  
gray, —  
Mats for what naked myth's white feet? —  
And, cool and calm, a cascade far away  
With even-falling beat.

Old logs, made sweet with death; rough  
bits of bark;  
And tangled twig and knotted root;  
And sunshine splashes and great pools of  
dark;  
And many a wild-bird's flute.

## WOOD NOTES

Here let me sit until the Indian, Dusk,  
With copper-colored feet, comes down;  
Sowing the wildwood with star-fire and  
musk,  
And shadows blue and brown.

Then side by side with some magician  
dream,  
To take the owlet-haunted lane,  
Half-roofed with vines; led by a firefly  
gleam,  
That brings me home again.

## WOOD NOTES

### I.

**T**HREE is a flute that follows me  
From tree to tree:  
A water flute a spirit sets  
To silver lips in waterfalls,  
And through the breath of violets  
A sparkling music calls :  
“ Hither! halloo! Oh, follow!  
Down leafy hill and hollow,  
Where, through clear swirls,

## UNDERTONES

With feet like pearls,  
Wade up the blue-eyed country girls.  
Hither! halloo! Oh, follow!''

### II.

There is a pipe that plays to me  
From tree to tree :  
A bramble pipe an elfin holds  
To golden lips in berry brakes,  
And, swinging o'er the elder wolds,  
A flickering music makes :  
" Come over! Come over  
The new-mown clover!  
Come over the new-mown hay!  
Where, there by the berries,  
With cheeks like cherries,  
And locks with which the warm wind  
merries,  
Brown girls are hilling the hay,  
All day!  
Come over the fields and away!  
Come over! Come over!''

## SONG

### SUCCESS

HOW some succeed who have least need,  
In that they make no effort for!  
And pluck, where others pluck a weed,  
The burning blossom of a star,  
Grown from no earthly seed.

For some shall reap that never sow;  
And some shall toil and not attain, —  
What boots it in ourselves to know  
Such labor here is not in vain,  
When we still see it so!

## SONG

UNTO the portal of the House of Song,  
Symbols of wrong and emblems of  
unrest,  
And mottoes of despair and envious jest,  
And stony masks of scorn and hate belong.

Who enters here shall feel his soul denied  
All welcome: lo! the chiselled form of Love,  
That stares in marble on the shrine above  
The tomb of Beauty, where he dreamed and  
died!

## UNDERTONES

Who enters here shall know no poppy flowers  
Of Rest, or harp-tones of serene Content;  
Only sad ghosts of music and of scent  
Shall mock the mind with their remembered  
powers.

Here must he wait till striving patience carves  
His name upon the century-storied floor;  
His heart's blood staining one dim pane the  
more  
In Fame's high casement while he sings and  
starves.

## THE OLD SPRING

### I.

UNDER rocks whereon the rose,  
Like a strip of morning, glows;  
Where the azure-throated newt  
Drowses on the twisted root;  
And the brown bees, humming homeward,  
Stop to suck the honey-dew;  
Fern and leaf-hid, gleaming gloamward,  
Drips the wildwood spring I knew,  
Drips the spring my boyhood knew.

## THE OLD SPRING

### II.

Myrrh and music everywhere  
Haunt its cascades; — like the hair  
That a naiad tosses cool,  
Swimming strangely beautiful,  
With white fragrance for her bosom,  
For her mouth a breath of song; —  
Under leaf and branch and blossom  
Flows the woodland spring along,  
Sparkling, singing, flows along.

### III.

Still the wet wan morns may touch  
Its gray rocks, perhaps; and such  
Slender stars as dusk may have  
Pierce the rose that roofs its wave;  
Still the thrush may call at noon tide,  
And the whippoorwill at night;  
Nevermore, by sun or moontide,  
Shall I see it gliding white,  
Falling, flowing, wild and white.

## UNDERTONES

### HILLS OF THE WEST

HILLS of the west, that gird  
Forest and farm,  
Home of the nestling bird,  
Housing from harm,  
When on your tops is heard  
Storm:

Hills of the west, that bar  
Belts of the gloam,  
Under the twilight star,  
Where the mists roam,  
Take ye the wanderer  
Home.

Hills of the west, that dream  
Under the moon,  
Making of wind and stream,  
Late-heard and soon,  
Parts of your lives that seem  
Tune.

## FLOWERS

Hills of the west, that take  
Slumber to ye,  
Be it for sorrow's sake  
Or memory,  
Part of such slumber make  
Me.

## FLOWERS

O H, why for us the blighted bloom !  
The blossom that lies withering !  
The Master of Life's changeless loom  
Hath wrought for us no changeless thing.

Where grows the rose of fadeless Grace ?  
Wherethrough the Spirit manifests  
The fact of an immortal race,  
The dream on which religion rests.

Where buds the lily of our Faith ?  
That grows for us in unknown wise,  
Out of the barren dust of death,  
The pregnant bloom of Paradise.

In Heaven ! so near that flowers know !  
That flowers see how near ! — and thus  
Reflect the knowledge here below  
Of love and life unknown to us.

## UNDERTONES

### SECOND SIGHT

THEY lean their faces to me through  
Green windows of the woods;  
Their white throats sweet with honey-dew  
Beneath low leafy hoods—  
No dream they dream but hath been true  
Here in the solitudes.

Star trillium, in the underbrush,  
In whom Spring bares her face;  
Sun eglantine, that breathes the blush  
Of Summer's quiet grace;  
Moon mallow, in whom lives the hush  
Of Autumn's tragic pace.

For one hath heard the dryad's sighs  
Behind the covering bark;  
And one hath felt the satyr's eyes  
Gleam in the bosky dark;  
And one hath seen the naiad rise  
In waters all a-spark.

## DEAD SEA FRUIT

I bend my soul unto them, stilled  
In worship man hath lost;  
The old-world myths that science killed  
Are living things almost  
To me through these whose forms are filled  
With Beauty's pagan ghost.

And through new eyes I seem to see  
The world these live within, —  
A shuttered world of mystery,  
Where unreal forms begin  
The real of ideality  
That has no unreal kin.

## DEAD SEA FRUIT

ALL things have power to hold us back.  
Our very hopes build up a wall  
Of doubt, whose shadow stretches black  
O'er all.

The dreams, that helped us once, become  
Dread disappointments, that oppose  
Dead eyes to ours, and lips made dumb  
With woes.

## UNDERTONES

The thoughts that opened doors before  
Within the mind's house, hide away;  
Discouragement hath locked each door  
For aye.

Come, loss, more frequently than gain!  
And failure than success! until  
The spirit's struggle to attain  
Is still!

## THE WOOD WITCH

**T**HREE is a woodland witch who lies  
With bloom-bright limbs and beam-  
bright eyes,  
Among the water-flags, that rank  
The slow brook's heron-haunted bank:  
The dragon-flies, in brass and blue,  
Are signs she works her sorcery through;  
Weird, wizard characters she weaves  
Her spells by under forest leaves, —  
These wait her word, like imps, upon  
The gray flag-pods; their wings, of lawn  
And gauze; their bodies gleamy green.  
While o'er the wet sand, — left between

## THE WOOD WITCH

The running water and the still, —  
In pansy hues and daffodil,  
The fancies that she meditates  
Take on most sumptuous shapes, with traits  
Like butterflies. 'T is she you hear,  
Whose sleepy rune, hummed in the ear  
Of silence, bees and beetles purr,  
And the dry-droning locusts whirr;  
Till, where the wood is very lone,  
Vague monotone meets monotone,  
And slumber is begot and born,  
A faery child, beneath the thorn.  
There is no mortal who may scorn  
The witchery she spreads around  
Her dim demesne, wherein is bound  
The beauty of abandoned time,  
As some sweet thought 'twixt rhyme and  
rhyme.  
And by her spell you shall behold  
The blue turn gray, the gray turn gold  
Of hollow heaven; and the brown  
Of twilight vistas twinkled down  
With fire-flies; and, in the gloom,  
Feel the cool vowels of perfume  
Slow-syllabled of weed and bloom.  
But, in the night, at languid rest, —  
When like a spirit's naked breast

## UNDERTONES

The moon slips from a silver mist, —  
With star-bound brow, and star-wreathed  
wrist,  
If you should see her rise and wave  
You welcome, — ah! what thing shall save  
You then? forevermore her slave!

## AT SUNSET

INTO the sunset's turquoise marge  
The moon dips, like a pearly barge  
Enchantment sails through magic seas,  
To fairyland Hesperides,  
Over the hills and away.

Into the fields, in ghost-gray gown,  
The young-eyed Dusk comes slowly down;  
Her apron filled with stars she stands,  
And one or two slip from her hands  
Over the hills and away.

Above the wood's black caldron bends  
The witch-faced Night and, muttering, blends  
The dew and heat, whose bubbles make  
The mist and musk that haunt the brake  
Over the hills and away.

## MAY

Oh, come with me, and let us go  
Beyond the sunset lying low,  
Beyond the twilight and the night,  
Into Love's kingdom of long light,  
Over the hills and away.

## MAY

THE golden disks of the rattlesnake-weed,  
That spangle the woods and dance —  
No gleam of gold that the twilights hold  
Is strong as their necromance :  
For, under the oaks where the wood-paths  
lead,  
The golden disks of the rattlesnake-weed  
Are the May's own utterance.

The azure stars of the bluet bloom  
That sprinkle the woodland's trance —  
No blink of blue that a cloud lets through  
Is sweet as their countenance:  
For, over the knolls that the woods perfume,  
The azure stars of the bluet bloom  
Are the light of the May's own glance.

## UNDERTONES

With her wondering words and her looks  
she comes,  
In a sunbeam of a gown;  
She needs but think and the blossoms wink,  
But look, and they shower down.  
By orchard ways, where the wild-bee hums,  
With her wondering words and her looks  
she comes,  
Like a little maid to town.

## THE WIND OF SPRING

THE wind that breathes of columbines  
And bleeding-hearts that crowd the  
rocks ;  
That shakes the balsam of the pines  
With music from his flashing locks,  
Stops at my city door and knocks.

He calls me far a-forest; where  
The twin-leaf and the blood-root bloom;  
And, circled by the amber air,  
Life sits with beauty and perfume  
Weaving the new web of her loom.

## INTERPRETED

He calls me where the waters run  
Through fronding ferns where haunts the  
hern;  
And, sparkling in the equal sun,  
Song leans beside her brimming urn,  
And dreams the dreams that love shall learn.

The wind has summoned, and I go, —  
To con God's meaning in each line  
The flowers write, and, walking slow,  
God's purpose, of which song is sign, —  
The wind's great, gusty hand in mine.

## INTERPRETED

WHAT magic shall solve us the secret  
Of beauty that 's born for an hour?  
That gleams like the flight of an egret,  
Or burns like the scent of a flower,  
With death for a dower?

What leaps in the bosk but a satyr?  
What pipes on the wind but a faun?  
Or laughs in the waters that scatter,  
But limbs of a nymph who is gone,  
When we walk in the dawn?

## UNDERTONES

What sings on the hills but a fairy?  
Or sighs in the fields but a sprite?  
What breathes through the leaves but the airy  
Soft spirits of shadow and light,  
When we walk in the night?

Behold how the world-heart is eager  
To draw us and hold us and claim!  
Through truths of the dreams that beleaguer  
Her soul she makes ours the same,  
And death but a name.

## THE WILLOW BOTTOM

LU SH green the grass that grows between  
The willows of the bottom-land;  
Verged by the careless water, tall and green,  
The brown-topped cat-tails stand.

The cows come gently here to browse,  
Slow through the great-leafed sycamores;  
You hear a dog bark from a low-roofed house  
With cedars round its doors.

## THE WILLOW BOTTOM

Then all is quiet as the wings  
Of the high buzzard floating there ;  
Anon a woman's high-pitched voice that  
    sings  
An old camp-meeting air.

A flapping cock that crows ; and then —  
Heard drowsy through the rustling corn —  
A flutter, and the cackling of a hen  
Within a hay-sweet barn.

How still again ! no water stirs ;  
No wind is heard ; although the weeds  
Are waved a little ; and from silk-filled burrs  
Drift by a few soft seeds.

So drugged with sleep and dreams, that you  
Expect to see her gliding by, —  
Hummed round of bees, through blossoms  
    spilling dew, —  
The Spirit of July.

## UNDERTONES

### THE OLD BARN

LOW, swallow-swept and gray,  
Between the orchard and the spring,  
All its wide windows overflowing hay,  
And crannied doors a-swing,  
The old barn stands to-day.

Deep in its hay the Leghorn hides  
A round white nest ; and, humming soft  
On roof and rafter, or its log-rude sides,  
Black in the sun-shot loft,  
The building hornet glides.

Along its corn-crib, cautiously  
As thieving fingers, skulks the rat ;  
Or, in warped stalls of fragrant timothy,  
Gnaws at some loosened slat,  
Or passes shadowy.

A dream of drouth made audible  
Before its door, hot, smooth, and shrill  
All day the locust sings. . . . What other  
spell  
Shall hold it, lazier still  
Than the long day's, now tell ? —

## CLEARING

Dusk and the cricket and the strain  
Of tree-toad and of frog ; and stars  
That burn above the rich west's ribbéd stain ;  
And dropping pasture bars,  
And cow-bells up the lane.

Night and the moon and katydid,  
And leaf-lisp of the wind-touched boughs ;  
And mazy shadows that the fire-flies thrid ;  
And sweet breath of the cows ;  
And the lone owl here hid.

## CLEARING

**B**EFORE the wind, with rain-drowned  
stocks,  
The pleated crimson hollyhocks  
Are bending ;  
And, smouldering in the breaking brown,  
Above the hills that edge the town,  
The day is ending.

The air is heavy with the damp ;  
And, one by one, each cottage lamp  
Is lighted ;  
Infrequent passers of the street  
Stroll on or stop to talk or greet,  
Benighted.

## UNDERTONES

I look beyond my city yard,  
And watch the white moon struggling hard,  
    Cloud-buried;  
The wind is driving toward the east,  
A wreck of pearl, all cracked and creased  
    And serried.

At times the moon, erupting, streaks  
Some long cloud ; like Andean peaks  
    That double  
Horizon-vast volcano chains,  
The earthquake scars with lava veins  
    That bubble.

The wind that blows from out the hills  
Is like a woman's touch that stills  
    A sorrow:  
The moon sits high with many a star  
In the deep calm: and fair and far  
    Abides to-morrow.

## REQUIEM

### I.

No more for him, where hills look down,  
Shall Morning crown  
Her rainy brow with blossom bands! —  
Whose rosy hands  
Drop wild flowers of the breaking skies  
Upon the sod 'neath which he lies. —  
No more! no more!

### II.

No more for him where waters sleep,  
Shall Evening heap  
The long gold of the perfect days!  
Whose pale hand lays  
Great poppies of the afterglow  
Upon the turf he rests below. —  
No more! no more!

### III.

No more for him, where woodlands loom,  
Shall Midnight bloom  
The star-flow'red acres of the blue!  
Whose brown hands strew  
Dead leaves of darkness, hushed and deep,  
Upon the grave where he doth sleep. —  
No more! no more!

## UNDERTONES

### IV.

The hills that Morning's footsteps wake ;  
The waves that take  
A brightness from the Eve ; the woods  
O'er which Night broods,  
Their spirits have, whose parts are one  
With his whose mortal part is done.  
Whose part is done!

### AT LAST

WHAT shall be said to him,  
Now he is dead ?  
Now that his eyes are dim,  
Low lies his head ?  
What shall be said to him,  
Now he is dead ?

One word to whisper of  
Low in his ear ;  
Sweet, but the one word “ love ”  
Haply he 'll hear.  
One word to whisper of  
Low in his ear.

## A DARK DAY

What shall be given him,  
Now he is dead?  
Now that his eyes are dim,  
Low lies his head?  
What shall be given him,  
Now he is dead?

Hope, that life long denied  
Here to his heart,  
Sweet, lay it now beside,  
Never to part.  
Hope, that life long denied  
Here to his heart.

## A DARK DAY

THOUGH Summer walks the world to-day  
With corn-crowned hours for her guard,  
Her thoughts have clad themselves in gray,  
And wait in Autumn's weedy yard.

And where the larkspur and the phlox  
Spread carpets wheresoe'er she pass,  
She seems to stand with sombre locks  
Bound bleak with fog-washed zinnias. —

## UNDERTONES

Fall's terra-cotta-colored flowers,  
Whose disks the trickling wet has tinged  
With dingy lustre when the bower's  
Thin, flame-flecked leaves the frost has  
singed ;

Or with slow feet, 'mid gaunt gold blooms  
Of marigolds her fingers twist,  
She seems to pass with Fall's perfumes,  
And dreams of sullen rain and mist.

## FALL

SAD-HEARTED spirit of the solitudes,  
Who comest through the ruin-wedded  
woods !  
Gray-gowned with fog, gold-girdled with  
the gloom  
Of tawny twilights ; burdened with perfume  
Of rain-wet uplands, chilly with the mist ;  
And all the beauty of the fire-kissed  
Cold forests crimsoning thy indolent way,  
Odorous of death and drowsy with decay.

## UNDERTONE

I think of thee as seated 'mid the showers  
Of languid leavesthat cover up the flowers,—  
The little flower-sisterhoods, whom June  
Once gave wild sweetness to, as to a tune  
A singer gives her soul's wild melody,—  
Watching the squirrel store his granary.  
Or, 'mid old orchards I have pictured thee :  
Thy hair's profusion blown about thy back ;  
One lovely shoulder bathed with gipsy black;  
Upon thy palm one nestling cheek, and sweet  
The rosy russets tumbled at thy feet.  
Was it a voice lamenting for the flowers ?  
A heart-sick bird, that sang of happier hours ?  
A cricket dirging days that soon must die ?  
Or did the ghost of Summer wander by ?

## UNDERTONE

**A**H me! too soon the Autumn comes  
Among these purple-plaintive hills!  
Too soon among the forest gums  
Premonitory flame she spills,  
Bleak, melancholy flame that kills.

## UNDERTONES

Her white fogs veil the morn that rims  
With wet the moonflow'r's elfin moons ;  
And, like exhausted starlight, dims  
The last slim lily-disk ; and swoons  
With scents of hazy afternoons.

Her gray mists haunt the sunset skies,  
And build the west's cadaverous fire,  
Where Sorrow sits with lonely eyes,  
And hands that wake her ancient lyre,  
Beside the ghost of dead Desire.

## CONCLUSION

**T**HE songs Love sang to us are dead:  
Yet shall he sing to us again,  
When the dull days are wrapped in lead,  
And the red woodland drips with rain.

The lily of our love is gone,  
That touched our spring with golden scent ;  
Now in the garden low upon  
The wind-stripped way its stalk is bent.

## CONCLUSION

Our rose of dreams is passed away,  
That lit our summer with sweet fire ;  
The storm beats bare each thorny spray,  
And its dead leaves are trod in mire.

The songs Love sang to us are dead ;  
Yet shall he sing to us again,  
When the dull days are wrapped in lead,  
And the red woodland drips with rain.

The marigold of memory  
Shall fill our autumn then with glow ;  
Haply its bitterness will be  
Sweeter than love of long ago.

The cypress of forgetfulness  
Shall haunt our winter with its hue ;  
The apathy to us not less  
Dear than the dreams our summer knew.

## UNDERTONES

### MONOCHROMES

#### I.

THE last rose falls, wrecked of the wind  
and rain ;  
Where once it bloomed the thorns alone  
remain :  
Dead in the wet the slow rain strews the  
rose.

The day was dim ; now eve comes on again,  
Grave as a life weighed down by many  
woes, —  
So is the joy dead, and alive the pain.

The brown leaf flutters where the green leaf  
died ;  
Bare are the boughs, and bleak the forest side :  
The wind is whirling with the last wild  
leaf.  
The eve was strange ; now dusk comes weird  
and wide,  
Gaunt as a life that lives alone with grief, —  
So doth the hope go and despair abide.

## MONOCHROMES

An empty nest hangs where the wood-bird  
    pled ;  
Along the west the dusk dies, stormy red :  
    The frost is subtle as a serpent's breath.  
The dusk was sad ; now night is overhead,  
    Grim as a soul brought face to face with  
        death —  
So life lives on when love, its life, lies dead.

### II.

Go your own ways. Who shall persuade  
    me now  
    To seek with high face for a star of hope ?  
    Or up endeavor's unsubmissive slope  
Advance a bosom of desire, and bow  
    A back of patience in a thankless task ?  
    Alone beside the grave of love I ask,  
        Shalt thou ? or thou ?

Leave go my hands. Fain would I walk  
    alone  
    The easy ways of silence and of sleep.  
    What though I go with eyes that cannot  
        weep,

## UNDERTONES

And lips contracted with no uttered moan,  
Through rocks and thorns, where every  
footprint bleeds,  
A dead-sea path of desert night that leads  
To one white stone!

Though sands be black and bitter black the  
sea,  
Night lie before me and behind me night,  
And God within far Heaven refuse to light  
The consolation of the dawn for me, —  
Between the shadowy bournes of Heaven  
and Hell,  
It is enough love leaves my soul to dwell  
With memory.

## DAYS AND DAYS

THE days that clothed white limbs with  
heat,  
And rocked the red rose on their breast,  
Have passed with amber-sandalled feet  
Into the ruby-gated west.

## DROUTH IN AUTUMN

These were the days that filled the heart  
With overflowing riches of  
Life; in whose soul no dream shall start  
But hath its origin in love.

Now come the days gray-huddled in  
The haze ; whose foggy footsteps drip ;  
Who pin beneath a gipsy chin  
The frosty marigold and hip. —

The days, whose forms fall shadowy  
Athwart the heart ; whose misty breath  
Shapes saddest sweets of memory  
Out of the bitterness of death.

## DROUTH IN AUTUMN

GNARLED acorn-oaks against a west  
Of copper, cavernous with fire ;  
A wind of frost that gives no rest  
To such lean leaves as haunt the brier,  
And hide the cricket's vibrant wire.

## UNDERTONES

Sear, shivering shocks, and stubble blurred  
With bramble-blots of dull maroon ;  
And creekless hills whereon no herd  
Finds pasture, and whereo'er the loon  
Flies, haggard as the rainless moon.

## MID-WINTER

ALL day the clouds hung ashen with the  
cold ;  
And through the snow the muffled waters  
fell ;  
The day seemed drowned in grief too deep  
to tell,  
Like some old hermit whose last bead is told.  
At eve the wind woke, and the snow-clouds  
rolled  
Aside to leave the fierce sky visible ;  
Harsh as an iron landscape of wan hell  
The dark hills hung framed in with gloomy  
gold.  
And then, towards night, the wind seemed  
some one at  
My window wailing : now a little child  
Crying outside the door ; and now the long

## COLD

Howl of some starved beast down the flue.  
I sat  
And knew 't was Winter with his madman  
    song  
Of miseries, whereon he stared and smiled.

## COLD

**A** MIST that froze beneath the moon  
and shook  
Minutest frosty fire in the air.  
All night the wind was still as lonely Care  
Who sighs before her shivering ingle-nook.  
The face of Winter wore a crueler look  
Than when he shakes the icicles from his  
    hair,  
And, in the boisterous pauses, lets his stare  
Freeze through the forest, fettering bough  
    and brook.  
He is the despot now who sits and dreams  
Of Desolation and Despair, and smiles  
At Poverty, who hath no place to rest,  
Who wanders o'er Life's snow-made path-  
    less miles,

## UNDERTONES

And sees the Home-of-Comfort's window  
gleams,  
And hugs her rag-wrapped baby to her  
breast.

## IN WINTER

### I.

WHEN black frosts pluck the acorns  
down,  
And in the lane the waters freeze ;  
And 'thwart red skies the wild-fowl flies,  
And death sits grimly 'mid the trees ;  
When home-lights glitter in the brown  
Of dusk like shaggy eyes, —  
Before the door his feet, sweetheart,  
And two white arms that greet, sweetheart,  
And two white arms that greet.

### II.

When ways are drifted with the leaves,  
And winds make music in the thorns ;  
And lone and lost above the frost  
The new moon shows its silver horns ;

## ON THE FARM

When underneath the lamp-lit eaves  
    The opened door is crossed, —  
A happy heart and light, sweetheart,  
And lips to kiss good-night, sweetheart,  
    And lips to kiss good-night.

## ON THE FARM

### I.

**H**E sang a song as he sowed the field,  
    Sowed the field at break of day :  
“ When the pursed-up leaves are as lips that  
    yield  
Balm and balsam, and Spring, — concealed  
In the odorous green, — is so revealed,  
    Halloo and oh !  
Hallo for the woods and the far away ! ”

### II.

He trilled a song as he mowed the mead,  
    Mowed the mead as noon begun :  
“ When the hills are gold with the ripened  
    seed,  
As the sunset stairs that loom and lead

## UNDERTONES

To the sky where Summer knows naught  
of need,  
    Halloo and oh !  
Hallo for the hills and the harvest sun ! ”

### III.

He hummed a song as he swung the flail,  
    Swung the flail in the afternoon :  
“ When the idle fields are a wrecker’s tale,  
That the Autumn tells to the twilight pale,  
As the Year turns seaward a crimson sail,  
    Halloo and oh !  
Hallo for the fields and the hunter’s-moon ! ”

### IV.

He whistled a song as he shouldered his axe,  
    Shouldered his axe in the evening storm :  
“ When the snow of the road shows the  
        rabbit’s tracks,  
And the wind is a whip that the Winter  
        cracks,  
With a herdsman’s cry, o’er the clouds’  
        black backs,  
    Halloo and oh !  
Hallo for home and a hearth to warm ! ”

## PATHS

### I.

WHAT words of mine can tell the spell  
Of garden ways I know so well ? —  
The path that takes me, in the spring,  
Past quinces where the blue-birds sing,  
Where peonies are blossoming,  
Unto a porch, wistaria-hung,  
Around whose steps May-lilies blow,  
A fair girl reaches down among,  
Her arm more white than their sweet snow.

### II.

What words of mine can tell the spell  
Of garden ways I know so well ? —  
Another path that leads me, when  
The summer-time is here again,  
Past hollyhocks that shame the west  
When the red sun has sunk to rest ;  
To roses bowering a nest,  
A lattice, 'neath which mignonette  
And deep geraniums surge and sough,  
Where, in the twilight, starless yet,  
A fair girl's eyes are stars enough.

## UNDERTONES

### III.

What words of mine can tell the spell  
Of garden ways I know so well ? —  
A path that takes me, when the days  
Of autumn wrap themselves in haze,  
Beneath the pippin-pelting tree,  
'Mid flitting butterfly and bee ;  
Unto a door where, fiery,  
The creeper climbs ; and, garnet-hued,  
The cock's-comb and the dahlia flare,  
And in the door, where shades intrude,  
Gleams out a fair girl's sunbeam hair.

### IV.

What words of mine can tell the spell  
Of garden ways I know so well ? —  
A path that brings me o'er the frost  
Of winter, when the moon is tossed  
In clouds ; beneath great cedars, weak  
With shaggy snow ; past shrubs blown bleak  
With shivering leaves ; to eaves that leak  
The tattered ice, whereunder is  
A fire-flickering window-space ;  
And in the light, with lips to kiss,  
A fair girl's welcome-giving face.

## A SONG IN SEASON

### I.

WHEN in the wind the vane turns round,  
    And round, and round ;  
And in his kennel whines the hound ;  
When all the gable eaves are bound  
With icicles of ragged gray,  
    A glinting gray ;  
There is little to do, and much to say,  
And you hug your fire and pass the day  
    With a thought of the springtime, dearie.

### II.

When late at night the owlet hoots,  
    And hoots, and hoots ;  
And wild winds make of keyholes flutes ;  
When to the door the goodman's boots  
Stamp through the snow the light stains red,  
    The fire-light's red ;  
There is nothing to do, and all is said,  
And you quaff your cider and go to bed  
    With a dream of the summer, dearie.

### III.

When, nearing dawn, the black cock crows,  
    And crows, and crows ;  
And from the barn the milch-cow lows ;

## UNDERTONES

And the milkmaid's cheeks have each a rose,  
And the still skies show a star or two,  
    Or one or two ;  
There is little to say, and much to do,  
And the heartier done the happier you,  
    With a song of the winter, dearie.

## APART

### I.

WHILE sunset burns and stars are few,  
    And roses scent the fading light,  
And like a slim urn, dripping dew,  
A spirit carries through the night,  
    The pearl-pale moon hangs new, —  
    I think of you, of you.

### II.

While waters flow, and soft winds woo  
The golden-hearted bud with sighs ;  
And, like a flower an angel threw,  
Out of the momentary skies  
    A star falls burning blue, —  
    I dream of you, of you.

## FAËRY MORRIS

### III.

While love believes, and hearts are true,  
So let me think, so let me dream ;  
The thought and dream so wedded to  
Your face, that, far apart, I seem  
    To see each thing you do,  
    And be with you, with you.

## FAËRY MORRIS

### I.

THE winds are whist ; and, hid in mist,  
    The moon hangs o'er the wooded  
height ;  
The bushy bee, with unkempt head,  
Hath made the sunflower's disk his bed,  
    And sleeps half-hid from sight.  
The owlet makes us melody —  
    Come dance with us in Faëry,  
    Come dance with us to-night.

### II.

The dew is damp ; the glow-worm's lamp  
Blurs in the moss its tawny light ;  
The great gray moth sinks, half-asleep,

## UNDERTONES

Where, in an elfin-laundered heap,  
The lily-gowns hang white.  
The crickets make us minstrelsy —  
Come dance with us in Faëry,  
Come dance with us to night.

### III.

With scents of heat, dew-chilled and sweet,  
The new-cut hay smells by the bight ;  
The ghost of some dead pansy bloom,  
The butterfly dreams in the gloom,  
Its pied wings folded tight.  
The world is lost in fantasy, —  
Come dance with us in Faëry,  
Come dance with us to-night.

## THE WORLD'S DESIRE

THE roses of voluptuousness  
Wreathe her dark locks and hide her  
eyes ;  
Her limbs are flower-like nakedness,  
Wherethrough the fragrant blood doth press,  
The blossom-blood of Paradise.

## THE UNATTAINABLE

She stands with Lilith finger tips,  
With Lilith hands ; and gathers up  
The wild wine of all life ; and sips  
With Lilith-laughter-lightened lips  
The soul as from a crystal cup.

What though she cast the cup away !  
The empty bowl that flashed with wine !  
Her curled lips' kiss, that stained the clay,  
Her fingers' touch — shall not these stay,  
That made its nothingness divine ?

Through one again shall live the glow,  
Immortalizing, of her touch ;  
And through the other, sweet to know  
How life swept flame once 'neath the snow  
Of her mooned breasts, — and this is much !

## THE UNATTAINABLE

**M**ARK thou ! a shadow crowned with  
fire of hell.  
Man holds her in his heart as night doth hold  
The moonlight memories of day's dead gold ;  
Or as a winter-withered asphodel  
In its dead loveliness holds scents of old.  
And looking on her, lo, he thinks 't is well.

## UNDERTONES

Who would not follow her whose glory  
sits,

Imperishably lovely on the air ?  
Who, from the arms of Earth's desire,  
flits

With eyes defiant and rebellious hair ? —  
Hers is the beauty that no man shall share.

He who hath seen, what shall it profit him ?

He who doth love, what shall his passion  
gain ?

When disappointment at her cup's bright  
brim

Poisons the pleasure with the hemlock  
pain ?

Hers is the passion that no man shall drain.

How long, how long since Life hath touched  
her eyes,

Making their night clairvoyant ! And how  
long

Since Love hath kissed her lips and made  
them wise,

Binding her brow with prophecy and song !

Hope clad her nakedness in lovely lies,

Giving into her hands the right of wrong !

## THE UNATTAINABLE

Lo! in her world she sets pale tents of thought,  
Unearthly bannered ; and her dreams' wild bands  
Besiege the heavens like a twilight fraught  
With recollections of lost stars. She stands  
Radiant as Lilith given from God's hands.

The golden rose of patience at her throat  
Drops fragrant petals — as a pensive tune  
Drops its surrendered sweetness note by note ; —  
And from her hands the buds of hope are strewn,  
Moon-flowers, mothered of the barren moon.

So in her flowers man seats him at her feet  
In star-faced worship, knowing all of this ;  
And now to him to die seems very sweet,  
Fed with the fire of her look and kiss ;  
While in his heart the blood's tumultuous beat  
Drowns, in her own, the drowsing serpent's hiss.

## UNDERTONES

He who hath dreamed but of her world shall  
give

All of his soul unto her restlessly:  
He who hath seen but her far face shall live  
No more for things we name reality:  
Such is the power of her tyranny.

He, whom she wins, hath nothing 'neath the  
sun;

Forgetting all that she may not forget  
He loves her, who still feeds his soul upon  
Dreams and desires, and doubt and vain  
regret, —  
Life's bitter bread his heart's fierce tears  
make wet.

What word of wisdom hast thou, Life, to  
wake

Him now ! or song of magic now to dull  
The dreams he lives in! or what charm to  
break

The spell that makes her evil beautiful!  
What charm to show her beauty hides a  
snake,  
Whose basilisk eyes burn dark behind a skull.

## REMEMBERED

HERE in the dusk I see her face again  
As then I knew it, ere she fell asleep;  
Renunciation glorifying pain  
Of her soul's inmost deep.

I shall not see its like again! the brow  
Of passive marble, purely aureoled, —  
As some pale lily in the afterglow, —  
With supernatural gold.

As if a rose should speak and, somehow  
heard  
By some strange sense, the unembodied  
sound  
Grow visible, her mouth was as a word  
A sweet thought falters 'round.

So do I still remember eyes imbued  
With far reflections — as the stars suggest  
The silence, purity and solitude  
Of infinite peace and rest.

She was my all. I loved her as men love  
A high desire, religion, an ideal —  
The meaning purpose in the loss whereof  
God shall alone reveal.

## UNDERTONES

### THE SEA SPIRIT

A H me ! I shall not waken soon  
From dreams of such divinity !  
A spirit singing in the moon  
To me.

White sea-spray driven of the storm  
Were not so wildly white as she !  
She beckoned with a foam-white arm  
To me.

With eyes dark green, and golden-green  
Loose locks that sparkled drippingly,  
Out of the green wave she did lean  
To me.

And sang ; till Earth and Heaven were  
A far, forgotten memory ;  
For more than Heaven seemed hid in her  
To me : —

Sleep, sweeter than love's face or home ;  
Love, more than immortality ;  
And music of the dreamy foam  
For me.

## A DREAM SHAPE

Pass over her with all thy ships  
With all thy stormy tides, O sea!  
The memory of immortal lips  
For me!

## A DREAM SHAPE

WITH moon-white hearts that held a  
gleam,  
I gathered wild flowers in a dream,  
And shaped a woman, whose sweet blood  
Was odor of the wildwood bud.

From dew, the starlight arrowed through,  
I wrought a woman's eyes of blue ;  
The lids, that on her eyeballs lay,  
Were rose-pale petals of the May.

I took the music of the breeze,  
And water whispering in the trees,  
And shaped the soul that breathed below  
A woman's blossom breasts of snow.

Out of a rose-bud's veins I drew  
The fragrant crimson beating through  
The languid lips of her, whose kiss  
Was as a poppy's drowsiness.

## UNDERTONES

Out of the moonlight and the air  
I wrought the glory of her hair,  
That o'er her eyes' blue heaven lay  
Like some gold cloud o'er dawn of day.

A shadow's shadow in the glass  
Of sleep, my spirit saw her pass :  
And, thinking of it now, meseems  
We only live within our dreams.

For in that time she was to me  
More real than our reality;  
More real than Earth, more real than I —  
The unreal things that pass and die.

## THE VAMPIRE

**A** LILY in a twilight place ?  
A moonflow'r in the lonely night ? —  
Strange beauty of a woman's face  
Of wildflow'r-white!

The rain that hangs a star's green ray  
Slim on a leaf-point's restlessness,  
Is not so glimmering green and gray  
As was her dress.

## THE VAMPIRE

I drew her dark hair from her eyes,  
And in their deeps beheld a while  
Such shadowy moonlight as the skies  
Of Hell may smile.

She held her mouth up redly wan,  
And burning cold, — I bent and kissed  
Such rosy snow as some wild dawn  
Makes of a mist.

God shall not take from me that hour,  
When round my neck her white arms  
clung!  
When 'neath my lips, like some fierce  
flower,  
Her white throat swung!

Or words she murmured while she leaned!  
Witch-words, she holds me softly by, —  
The spell that binds me to a fiend  
Until I die.

## UNDERTONES

### WILL-O'-THE-WISP

#### I.

**T**HREE in the calamus he stands  
With frog-webbed feet and bat-winged  
hands;  
His glow-worm garb glints goblin-wise;  
And elfishly, and elfishly,  
Above the gleam of owlet eyes,  
A death's-moth cap of downy dyes  
Nods out at me, nods out at me.

#### II.

Now in the reeds his face looks white  
As witch-down on a witches' night;  
Now through the dark old haunted mill,  
So eerily, so eerily,  
He flits; and with a whippoorwill  
Mouth calls, and seems to syllable,  
“Come follow me! come follow me! ”

#### III.

Now o'er the sluggish stream he wends,  
A slim light at his finger-ends;

## THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN

The spotted spawn, the toad hath clomb,  
Slips oozily, slips oozily ;  
His easy footsteps seem to come —  
Like bubble-gaspings of the scum —  
Now near to me, now near to me.

### IV.

There by the stagnant pool he stands,  
A fox-fire lamp in flickering hands;  
The weeds are slimy to the tread,  
And mockingly, and mockingly,  
With slanted eyes and eldritch head  
He leans above a face long dead, —  
The face of me! the face of me!

## THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN

ON the black road through the wood  
As I rode,  
There the Headless Horseman stood;  
By the wild pool in the wood,  
As I rode.

## UNDERTONES

From the shadow of an oak,  
As I rode,  
Demon steed and rider broke;  
By the thunder-shattered oak,  
As I rode.

On the waste road through the plain,  
As I rode,  
At my back he whirled like rain;  
On the tempest-blackened plain,  
As I rode.

Four fierce hoofs shod red with fire,  
As I rode,  
Woke the wild rocks, dark and dire ;  
Eyes and nostrils streamed with fire,  
As I rode.

On the deep road through the rocks,  
As I rode,  
I could reach his horse's locks;  
Through the echo-hurling rocks,  
As I rode.

## THE WERE-WOLF

And again I looked behind,  
As I rode, —  
Dark as night and swift as wind,  
Towering, he rode behind,  
As I rode.

On the steep road down the dell,  
As I rode,  
In the night I heard a bell,  
In the village in the dell,  
As I rode.

And my soul called out in prayer,  
As I rode, —  
Lo! the demon went in air,  
Leaving me alone in prayer,  
As I rode.

## THE WERE-WOLF

SHE.

NAY; still amort, my love? Why dost  
thou lag?

HE.

The strix-owl cried.

## UNDERTONES

SHE.

Nay! yon wild  
stream that leaps  
Hoarse from the black pines of the Hakel  
steeps,  
A moon-tipped water, down a glittering  
crag.—  
Why so aghast, sweetheart? Why dost  
thou stop?

HE.

The demon-huntsman passed with hooting  
horn!

SHE.

Nay! 't was the blind wind sweeping through  
the thorn  
Around the ruins of the Dumburg's top.

HE.

My limbs are cold.

SHE.

Come! warm thee in  
mine arms.

## THE WERE-WOLF

HE.

Mine eyes are weary.

SHE.

Rest them, love, on  
mine.

HE.

I am athirst.

SHE.

Quench on my lips thy thirst. —  
O dear belovéd, how thy last kiss warms  
My blood again!

HE.

Off! . . . How thy eye-  
balls shine!  
Thy face! . . . thy form! . . . So do I  
die accursed !

## UNDERTONES

### THE TROGLODYTE

IN ages dead, a troglodyte,  
At the hollow roots of a monster  
height, —  
That grew from the heart of the world to  
light, —  
I dwelt in caverns : over me  
Were mountains older than the moon ;  
And forests vaster than the sea,  
And gulfs, that the earthquake's hand had  
hewn,  
Hung under me. And late and soon  
I heard the dæmon of change that sighed  
A cosmic language of mystery ;  
While life sat silent, primeval-eyed,  
With the infant spirit of prophecy.

Gaunt stars glared down on the Titan peaks ;  
And the gaunter glare of the cratered streaks  
Of the sunset's ruin heard condor shrieks.  
The roar of cataracts hurled in air,  
And the hurricane laying his thunders bare,  
And rush of battling beasts, — whose lair

## THE CITY OF DARKNESS

Was the antechamber of nadir-gloom, —  
Were my outworld joys. But who shall tell  
The awe of the depths that heard the boom  
Of the iron rivers that fashioned Hell!

## THE CITY OF DARKNESS

WIDE-walled it stands in heathen lands  
Beside a mystic sea,  
With streets strange-trod of many a god,  
And templed blasphemy.

Far in the night, a rose of light  
It shines beside the sea;  
But overhead an unknown dread  
Impends eternally.

There is a sound above, around  
Of music by the sea ;  
And weird and wide the torches glide  
Of pagan revelry.

There is a noise as of a voice  
That calls beneath the sea ;  
And all the deep grows pale with sleep  
And vague expectancy.

## UNDERTONES

Then slowly up — as from a cup  
Seethes poison — lifts the sea;  
Wild mass on mass, as in black glass,  
The town glows fiery.

Red-lit it glowers like Hell's dark towers  
Set in the iron sea;  
And monster swarms with awful forms  
Roll though it cloudily.

Still overhead the unknown dread,  
Whose shadow dyes the sea,  
At wrath-winged wait behind its gate  
Till God shall set it free.

A taloned flash, an earthquake crash,  
And, lo! upon the sea,  
Black wall on wall, a giant pall,  
Night settles hideously.

And where it burned, a rose inurned,  
Red in the vasty sea,  
The phantasm of the dread above  
Sits in immensity.

## TRANSMUTATION

**T**O me all beauty that I see  
Is melody made visible:  
An earth-translated state, may be,  
Of music heard in Heaven or Hell.

Out of some love-impassioned strain  
Of saints, the rose evolved its bloom;  
And, dreaming of it here again,  
Perhaps re-lives it as perfume.

Out of some chant that demons sing  
Of hate and pain, the sunset grew;  
And, haply, still remembering,  
Re-lives it here as some wild hue.

THE END



FIVE HUNDRED AND FIFTY COPIES OF  
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